



ESEA Information Update

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction/Elizabeth Burmaster, State Superintendent, P.O. Box 7841/Madison, WI 53707-7841

Bulletin No. 02.09

February 7, 2003

Topic: Parents' Right to Receive Teacher Information

The recently reauthorized federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), also known as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, requires additional reporting by both state and local education agencies.

This bulletin covers the requirement to notify parents about teacher quality. Information is available in other DPI bulletins or documents about the annual school report card, parent notification requirements regarding military recruitment, and options and requirements for parents whose children

- attend schools identified for improvement;
- attend unsafe schools; or
- have been identified as limited-English proficient and are or will be participating in a language instruction program.

Teacher Information

At the beginning of every school year, school districts receiving Title I funds must notify all parents of children attending Title I schools that they may request information about the qualifications of their children's teachers and paraprofessionals. This information must be provided to parents in a uniform format and "to the extent practicable" in a language that parents can understand. (Public Education Network, An Action Guide for Community and Parent Leaders)

The No Child Left Behind Act (Title I, Section 1111(h)(6)) says parents have the right to request the following information on the professional qualifications of their children's teachers:

- whether the teacher has met state qualifications and has a license for the grade level and the subject area he or she teaches;
- whether the teacher has an emergency or provisional license;
- what degrees the teacher holds and the field of discipline of his or her certification or degree; and
- whether the child is being provided services by paraprofessionals and, if so, their qualifications.

Principals may notify parents about this right with a usual communication to homes of students, such as a school newsletter or parent handbook. The notice should state that federal law gives them this right and that the school will reply in a timely fashion to requests for information.

In addition, an individual Title I school also must notify parents in a timely manner

- when their child has been assigned to a teacher who does not meet the qualifications of a highly qualified teacher; or
- when their child has been taught for four or more consecutive weeks by a teacher who does not meet the highly qualified requirements.

Highly Qualified Teachers

An article in *The Achiever* (December 2002), a newsletter of the U.S. Department of Education, addresses the issue of highly qualified teachers: "To help parents make good decisions about their children's schools, every year principals must attest to whether a school is in compliance with the "highly qualified" teacher requirement, and this information must be maintained at the school and district offices where it must be made available to the public upon request. This information must also be included on the state report cards required under Title I guidelines."

All teachers of core subjects must be highly qualified by 2005-06. Because students with limited English proficiency (LEP) and students with disabilities must meet the same standards as all other students, their teachers must meet the same standards for content knowledge as other teachers. However, special educators who do not directly instruct students on any core academic subject, or who only provide consultation to highly qualified teachers of core academic subjects in adapting curricula, using behavioral supports and interventions, and selecting appropriate accommodations, are not subject to the same requirements that apply to teachers of core academic subjects. State education agencies (SEA) and local education agencies (LEA) must ensure that all special education personnel, including related service providers, meet the personnel standards requirements of section 612(a)(15) of the IDEA and 34 CFR §300.136. Special education teachers who provide instruction in core academic subjects also must meet the "highly qualified" standards of the law. Both the law and the final regulations permit flexibility in determining how teachers meet the "highly qualified" requirements. For example, teachers may demonstrate competency by taking a test, and states have flexibility to tailor those tests to the subjects taught by teachers, including special education teachers and teachers of LEP students. Teachers who hold special education licenses at the level and in the category of assignment are considered "highly qualified."

Teachers on emergency licenses should be enrolled in an alternative training program to be considered "highly qualified."

Teachers pursuing certification through "alternate routes" must receive high-quality professional development that is sustained, intensive, and classroom-focused in order to have a positive and lasting impact on classroom instruction, before and while teaching; participate in a program of intensive supervision that consists of structured guidance and regular ongoing support for teachers or a teacher mentoring program; assume functions as a teacher only for a specified period of time not to exceed three years; and demonstrate satisfactory progress toward full certification as prescribed by the state.

The qualifications of paraprofessionals are a subject of another DPI Bulletin, and they must be made available in response to parent requests. The paraprofessional bulletin can be found at www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/esea/bul_0203.html.

Availability of Information

Teacher license information can be accessed from the DPI website at www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/dlsis/tel/lisearch.html. Other information on teachers' degrees and the assignment of paraprofessionals should be available for parents and others in the school office. A sample communication with parents to satisfy this requirement follows. Feel free to use this, or an adaptation, if it suits your purpose.

SAMPLE LETTER—Use or adapt to fit your needs.

Dear Parent:

Federal law requires that we share with you the qualifications of teachers in this school (or insert school name). There are questions you may ask, including:

- Is my child's teacher licensed to teach the grades or subjects assigned?
- Has the state waived any requirements for my child's teacher?
- What was the college major of my child's teacher?
- What degrees does my child's teacher hold?
- Are there instructional aides working with my child? If so, what are their qualifications?

Let me say that all teachers have at least a bachelor's degree in all Wisconsin (or your district) schools, and (number or percent) have advanced degrees. In addition all (or a percent) of the teachers in this school (or school's name) are fully licensed for their assignment. If you want to see the state qualification for your child's teacher you may ask us or find it on the DPI website at www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/dlsis/tel/lisearch.html.

In addition, we have (number) instructional aides, and they all (or a percent) are considered qualified for this work. If you would like more information about this school (or school's name), please feel free to call me at (telephone number).

Sincerely,

(Principal's or designee's signature).

For more information on teacher qualifications or the reporting requirement for teachers and paraprofessionals under the No Child Left Behind legislation, contact:

Judy Peppard
Director
Teacher Education/Professional
Development and Licensing
608-266-0986
judy.peppard@dpi.state.wi.us